United Nations

Press Release

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Security Council deplores Israel's recent decision to expel four Palestinians from the occupied territories.

- Security Council hears oral report by Secretary-General saying current conditions for overall agreement between Cypriot and Turkish communities in Cyprus are "favourable".

- Twenty-one countries notify Council President of continued economic hardship, and financial losses totalling over $30 billion due to sanctions against Iraq.

- Food and Agriculture Organization sends emergency food aid totalling $17 million to vulnerable groups in Iraq.

- Colombia to host eighth session of United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD VIII), to be held in Cartagena de Indias next February.

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The Security Council this afternoon deplored Israel's recent decision to expel four Palestinian civilians from the occupied Arab territories, calling that action a violation of the 1949 Geneva Convention on the Protection of Civilians in Time of War. In a statement issued by Council President Peter Hohenfellner of Austria on their behalf, the Council members called upon the Israeli Government to desist in such expulsions and to ensure the safe return of those deported.

In the statement, which was formulated following consultations, the Council Members said they were "gravely concerned" by the deteriorating situation in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, especially by the effects of the curfews imposed by Israel.

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For information media—not an official record

Earlier this afternoon the Council met in consultations to hear an oral report by Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar on his good offices mission on Cyprus.

In his report, the Secretary-General said the current conditions for an overall agreement were "favourable", and that it would be possible to reach an agreed outline in "a few months". He expressed hope that the clarifications that had emerged from the discussions over the past months would make it possible to advance on a number of issues.

The two sides -- the Cypriot and the Turkish community -- should now be able to work out an arrangement that would guarantee the security of both communities of Cyprus, and provide for the withdrawal of all non-Cypriot forces, the Secretary-General said. The powers and functions to be vested in the federal government were another area where it should now be possible for the two sides to come to an agreed position, he said.

Among the issues which still remained to be explored before an agreement could be reached, Mr. Perez de Cuellar said, were territorial adjustments, freedom of settlement and displaced persons. He proposed to report again to the Council by early July on the outcome of his efforts.

In a separate development, a United Nations official said earlier today that the Secretary-General had informed the Council last night that Under-Secretary-General Martti Ahtisaari's mission to Kuwait had ended. Mr. Ahtisaari would return to New York from Geneva where he was currently preparing his final report to the Council.

The official said that with regard to the special mission to Kuwait, the Secretary-General had indicated to the Council that the head of the mission, Abdulrahim Farah, had experienced many difficulties in carrying out his tasks, particularly because of the lack of communications systems. Mr. Farah had therefore decided to extend the mission for another week.

In addition, the official said, the Secretary-General had informed the Council of his appointment of the Assistant Secretary-General in the Department of Administration and Management, Richard Foran, to coordinate the return of seized Kuwaiti property.

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In a related development, 21 countries have notified the President of the Security Council of continued economic hardship due to the sanctions against Iraq.

In a collective memorandum, dated 22 March, the countries' Permanent Representatives noted that past appeals by the Secretary-General had not sparked a sufficient response, and called on the Council to renew its efforts to find a solution to the problem. The countries are Bangladesh, Bulgaria,

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Czechoslovakia, Djibouti, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Uruguay, Viet Nam, Yemen, and Yugoslavia.

A United Nations official told correspondents that the States, which had invoked article 50 of the United Nations Charter concerning resolution 661 (1990), had restated their firm determination to continue to comply fully with the provisions of the resolution in spite of the grave economic, financial and commercial losses incurred as a result of the sanctions. The countries claimed that the estimated total loss was more than $30 billion dollars.

The official said the Secretary-General had already appealed to the international community to provide immediate technical and economic assistance to the countries affected. He had also contacted the competent United Nations agencies and organizations including the international financial institutions and regional development banks to "review their programmes of assistance with a view to alleviating the present economic hardships arising from the application of the sanctions".

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The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) announced yesterday that vulnerable groups in Iraq whose numbers have risen by 50 per cent because of the war would be provided emergency food aid worth over $17 million.

According to the Agency, local food production in Iraq represented only about 25 to 30 per cent of consumption requirements. Stocks of basic foods were reportedly being depleted, while cereals normally used for animal feed were now being used also for human feeding. Milk powder was exclusively being distributed to sick children on medical prescription.

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Colombia will be the host of the eighth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), to be held in February next year. The Board of UNCTAD decided last week to recommend to the General Assembly that Cartagena de Indias be the host city. Uruguay had originally offered to host the Conference but had since asked for the Conference to be held elsewhere.

The theme of the Conference will be "Strengthening national and international action and multilateral cooperation for a healthy, secure and equitable world economy". Singled out for special consideration are resources for development; international trade; technology; services; and commodities.

The President of the Board, Emilio Artacho Castellano of Spain, who will also chair the special session for UNCTAD VIII, said he saw in the Conference a good opportunity to pursue the dialogue that had been launched recently in other international bodies.

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